



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

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FOUR MEXICAN NATIONALS INDICTED FOR HOSTAGE TAKING

TUCSON, Ariz.- A federal grand jury here returned a 17-count indictment late Wednesday against Pablo Rodriguez, 20; Said Contreras-Corral, 22; Felipe Torres-Beltran, 26; and Javier Cota-Palafox, 22; all of Mexico, charging them with multiple violations including Conspiracy to Commit Hostage Taking, Hostage Taking, Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens for Profit, Transportation of Illegal Aliens for Profit, Illegal Alien in Possession of a Firearm, Brandishing a Firearm During a Crime of Violence and Discharge of a Firearm During a Crime of Violence.

The indictment alleges that the group traveled to the Tucson, Ariz. area to locate a group of illegal aliens who had recently crossed the border. The defendants then robbed the aliens at gunpoint, detained them, discharged their weapons, and were in the process of transporting them to Phoenix, where they would be held as hostages until their family members paid money for their release. At the time of the defendants' arrest, agents seized the following items: two GF WASR-10, Romanian AK-47 Rifles, a Ruger P89DC 9mm handgun, a Randall Service Model-C .45 caliber pistol, four magazines, and 159 bullets. All defendants are detained pending trial.

A conviction for Conspiracy to Commit Hostage Taking and for Hostage Taking carries a maximum penalty of life in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. A conviction for Discharging of a Firearm During a Crime of Violence, Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens for Profit, and Transportation of Illegal Aliens for Profit, and being an Illegal Alien in Possession of a Firearm each carries a maximum penalty of ten years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. A conviction for Brandishing a Firearm During a Crime of Violence carries a maximum penalty of seven years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, the assigned judge will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted by agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Border Patrol and the Pima County Sheriff's Department. The prosecution is being handled by Irene C. Feldman, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, in Tucson, Ariz.

CASE NUMBER: CR-06-0403-TUC-CKJ (HCE)
RELEASE NUMBER: 2006-031(Rodriguez et al)

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